



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton
National Park

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 25, 2004 04-37

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Food-Conditioned Bear Euthanized In Grand Teton National Park

Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott announced today that park biologists euthanized a male black bear, approximately eight years old, on Friday evening, July 23, out of concern for public safety. First trapped in June of 2002 for research purposes by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, bear number 65 had obtained at least a half dozen food rewards from unattended coolers and backpacks over the past few weeks. The repeated food rewards, habituation to people and increasingly bold behavior prompted park officials to make the decision to remove this bear from the population, eliminating potential threats to visitors.

The 229-pound bear began frequenting Jenny, String and Leigh lakes—areas of concentrated visitor use—after it obtained food from a cooler on the east side of Jenny Lake in early July. The bear exhibited no fear of people, approached hikers and picnickers repeatedly, and obtained food on several occasions. Last Saturday, July 17, park rangers trapped, collared and relocated the bear to the Grassy Lake Road area, near the park's northern border. By Thursday, July 22, the bear had made its way back to Leigh Lake—a distance of about thirty miles. That evening, a swimmer left their backpack unattended along the lakeshore, and the bear obtained another food reward from the pack. Given its history of repeated food rewards, its prompt return to Leigh Lake, and its ability to obtain food immediately upon return, the decision was made to euthanize this bear.

Superintendent Scott said, "It is very unfortunate that we were forced to destroy this bear, or any bear, because of human negligence. Bears like number 65 become problems only after obtaining successive food rewards associated with human activities."

Park officials remind visitors that bears are active this summer in Grand Teton, not only in the backcountry but also in areas of high visitor use. It is extremely important to dispose of garbage and store food properly—for the health and safety of bears, as well as for that of park visitors. Do not leave food or backpacks unattended, even for a minute. Use available storage facilities or hang food and scented items using the counter balance method when camping in the backcountry. Avoid surprising bears by making noise while hiking. Never run from bears, and do not drop backpacks if a bear charges you. Once a bear acquires human food, it often loses its fear of people and can become habituated and sometimes dangerous.

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